UNITED NATIONS

# Daily Highlights

Department of Public Information • Central News Section • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/1883
1 May 1995

## MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Croatian Army launches major offensive against Croatian Serb forces after telling UNCRO peace-keepers to get out of way; Bosnian cessation of hostilities agreement expires.

+ Secretary-General begins official visit to New Zealand; has meetings with Governor-General and Prime Minister.

+ Special Envoy Ajello discusses recent killings at Kibeho and UNAMIR mandate with Government of Rwanda.

+ In message to United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention, Secretary-General says rising crime is impairing process of development.

+ United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator expresses concern over fate of aid workers missing in Chechnya.

+ Security Council Committee on arms embargo against Liberia elects Chairman at first meeting.

+ Committee on Information begins two-week session; to examine United Nations information policies and progress in field of communications.

+ International Law Commission to hold forty-seventh session in Geneva from 2 May to 21 June.

+ UNDP and UNEP sign agreements on combating desertification and providing information on sustainable development and environment.

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The Croatian Army this morning launched a major offensive against Croatian Serb forces, after telling the United Nations Confidence Restoration Operation in Croatia (UNCRO) peace-keepers in the Sector "to get out of the way". A United Nations spokesman said there was fighting all along the south-west and south-east edges of the Sector. Three Jordanian peace-keepers were injured -- one seriously -- when their observation post was hit by tank

fire. Meanwhile, 115 United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) personnel were detained by Bosnian Serb forces on the fringe of Sector West in the area of Okucanj.

The spokesman described the situation in Croatia as very serious, adding that the United Nations had been holding talks with the parties. Meanwhile, the cessation of hostilities agreement between the Bosnian parties expired yesterday, after Special Representative Yasushi Akashi was unable to secure its extension.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali arrived yesterday in Wellington to begin a four-day official visit to New Zealand. This morning, he called on Governor-General Catherine Tizard, and then proceeded to Parliament House to meet with Prime Minister James Bolger. He attended a cabinet meeting chaired by the Prime Minister and attended by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Don McKinnon, as well as several other Ministers. They discussed New Zealand's role in the United Nations and the Organization's role in the world, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Non-Proliferation Treaty Conference and other aspects of disarmament.

The Secretary-General later addressed a meeting hosted by Foreign Minister McKinnon in association with the New Zealand Institute of International Affairs and the United Nations Association of New Zealand. He expressed gratitude for New Zealand's support for the Organization, and praised its role in peace-keeping and its active involvement in the work of the Security Council in the past two years.

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The Secretary-General's Special Envoy to Rwanda, Aldo Ajello, has met with the country's President, Vice-President, Prime Minister and Defence Minister, a United Nations spokesman said today. They discussed the recent killings at the Kibeho camp for displaced persons and the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR), among other matters. The Government indicated that it wanted UNAMIR's strength reduced.

Meanwhile, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations in Rwanda have completed a comprehensive assessment of needs in the communes receiving internally displaced persons. A concerted effort is being made to shift the focus of attention to those communes, the spokesman noted.

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Rising crime is impairing the process of development and the general well-being of humanity, according to Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali. He made that comment in a message to the Ninth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, which began in Cairo on

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Saturday. He stressed that improving governance was essential for the success of any development agenda or strategy, adding that good governance depended on effective law enforcement and judicial systems.

The Secretary-General warned that new and rapacious forms of criminality were taking advantage of trends that had brought many benefits: improvements in information and transportation technologies, the relaxation of border controls and the internationalization of world markets. Meanwhile, ethnic, social and political conflicts were eroding the institutions of government and administration. He urged the international community to take action to preserve the rule of law.

For the past 40 years, the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme had developed and promoted standards, norms and guidelines to strengthen the rule of law, he went on to say. It had promoted international cooperation in the field of crime prevention and criminal justice, providing assistance to countries with problems of national and transnational crime. This year, the Crime Congress had assumed a new format. It included not only the traditional forum for debate, but new workshops of a technical nature on priority issues. The Congress provided a unique global framework within which developed and developing countries could address the problem of crime.

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The United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator and Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Peter Hansen, has expressed concern over the fate of missing aid workers in Chechnya. Frederick Cuny, his interpreter and two doctors from the Russian Red Cross disappeared on 9 April while on a humanitarian mission for the Soros Foundation. Mr. Hansen appealed to all concerned to do their utmost to locate Mr. Cuny and his companions, and to ensure their safe return.

Mr. Hansen emphasized that respect for the safety and security of humanitarian relief workers was of cardinal importance. That principle must be upheld under all circumstances. Failure to do so could only result in greater suffering for those affected by the conflict, he warned.

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The Committee established by the Security Council to supervise implementation of the arms embargo against Liberia held its first meeting on Friday. The Committee elected Ambassador Gerardo Martinez Blanco of Honduras as its Chairman, in his personal capacity. The Vice-Chairmen will be provided by the delegations of Indonesia and Italy.

The Committee is composed of all members of the Security Council and is formally known as the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 985 (1995) concerning Liberia.

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The Committee on Information today began a two-week session at Headquarters. It will continue its ongoing examination of United Nations public information policies and activities, as well as of progress achieved by the United Nations system in the fields of information and communications. The Committee will also continue its review of efforts to promote a new information and communication order, aimed at fostering peace and international understanding.

In considering these questions, the Committee will have before it reports of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations information centres, as well as the publications of the Department of Public Information (DPI).

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The International Law Commission will begin its forty-seventh session in Geneva tomorrow. It will consider, among other topics, a draft code on crimes against the peace and security of mankind, and State responsibility and international liability for the injurious consequences of acts not prohibited by international law.

The Commission provisionally adopted the articles of the draft code after a first reading in 1991. Last year, it began the second reading of 15 of those articles. During the current session, the Commission will continue its second reading of the draft, focusing on six additional articles contained in a report of the Special Rapporteur.

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The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) have signed two agreements to help combat desertification and to increase the flow of information on sustainable development and the environment in developing countries.

The UNEP/UNDP Partnership to Combat Desertification will ensure that work programmes, expertise and resources are deployed in the most complementary and strategic manner. Building on 15 years of joint experience with the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office, it will seek additional support and resources for joint programmes and work to be carried out in all regions affected by desertification.

The second agreement links the UNEP and UNDP computer networks delivering data on sustainable development and the environment around the world. The UNDP's Sustainable Development Network provides access and information to all concerned with sustainable development -- including governments, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, universities and the media. UNEP's "INFOTERRA" is a worldwide computer network of 6,500 government-designated institutions in 170 countries.

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